

An Old Christmas Hymn

Come, All Ye Faithful

Drawing by Arthur I. Keller



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COME, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
 O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
 Come and behold Him born, the King of Angels.
 O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
 O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.
 Amen.

GOD of God, Light of Light,
 Lo, He abhors not the Virgin's womb;
 Very God, begotten, not created;
 O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
 O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.
 Amen.

SING, choirs of Angels, sing in exultation;
 Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;
 Glory to God in the highest;
 O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
 O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.
 Amen.

PEA, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning,
 Jesus, to Thee be glory giv'n;
 Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
 O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
 O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.
 Amen.

The Christmas Ghost

THE Christmas ghost, happily, doesn't afflict Americans as it does the English. Our Christmas gets its chills from our weather alone.

Ever notice how the great big English picture weeklies fairly revel in ghost stories at Christmas time? It looks as if an English family can't really enjoy roast pig or turkey with plum pudding unless the cold shivers are chasing up and down their backbones as they listen to some unmitigated liar telling how he encountered the spook with the clanking chains in the lonely bedroom of the old manse. Those Christmas ghost stories started thousands of years ago, before England was heard of.

Back as far as the time of the Pharaohs in Egypt tables were laid with food for the spirits of the departed. And on down through Europe's folklore there linger traditions of the reluctant dead hovering around the bright and cheerful fireside, loth to depart from the warmth and comfort of the home.

It is noticeable that the living in subsequent years grew less considerate of the dear departed, and in England about New Year's day they used to go out with a blunderbuss and do their inhospitable best to blow the poor old ghosts permanently into eternity. We have improved vastly on such antipathies for the dead: we forget them completely.

How'd You Like to Be Sylvester?

AMERICANS and English aren't the only people who know what a good thing mistletoe is. A great discovery like that can't be monopolized.

A traveler in the Rhaetian Alps, in Austria, will find the people lingering in the inns on New Year's eve. The windows and walls are decorated with green pine twigs, middle of the room. In a dark corner hidden a personage called Sylvester, made up for age and ugliness as typifying the old year. On Sylvester's head is a mistletoe wreath. The minute a girl passes under with which the fond Austrian disposition that there is never a lack of candidates for the role of Sylvester.

The New but Ancient Yule Log

IF YOU'RE fashionable this Christmas on the strength of the gasol imitation of the real thing, or if you're very fashionable and own a real, genuine, blown-in-the-bottle fireplace that burrs honest wood and warms the air a whole yard out from the andirons, you will probably indulge in a Yule log. It's easy enough.

You can either pick out the biggest billet in the cord of hickory for which the robbers have charged you \$15 or \$20, or you can sneak out and saw off a section of one of the pillars supporting the colonial porch next door, which has so long offended your eye and affronted your pride. And sitting happily around the crackling flames, you can tell the children stories of the way the retainers dragged the log of Yule into old English baronial halls, with the heir to the hall riding it astride.

If you want to treat the Yule log in the fashion it was dealt with in those ancient baronial halls, save scrupulously the charred end of the one you light this Christmas for use in starting the new Yule log next year. That practice was a relic of the still more ancient practice by which the hearth fire was never allowed to die out; and probably the perpetual hearth fire dates back to the years of the cave men, when they needed a continuous fire in their hillside dwellings to ward off the intrusion of bigger beasts of prey than they were.

Christmas Giving as Old as Rome's Seven Hills

WHEN Caligula, at the Roman Kalends preceding the New Year, realized that his daughter was going to be married while, to all intents and purposes, he was broke, although he was running the great Roman empire, he sent out word that, if his countrymen were going to send him gifts that year, they might as well make their gifts cash to help him provide her with a proper dowry. Next day he had to wade through hills of gold at his palace door.

Our Christmas giving, as a custom, is as old as Rome's seven hills. The old Romans used to start in with their Saturnalia, and a few days later, at January 1,

they dashed jubilantly into the Kalends. It was the season for feasting and merrymaking, with profuse and universal generosity thrown in for good measure.

In the homes of the wealthy luxurious abundance prevailed; in the dwellings of the poor there was always some striving for the makings of a feast. All that was connected with toll was abandoned; even the children didn't have to go to school. The very slaves were permitted to forget their thralldom. From end to end of the vast empire people vied with one another in giving presents, and the very misers were expected then to open their coffers and remember that money was made to be spent, not hoarded.

So there, in ancient Rome, were all the popular makings of our own Christmas season, right down to the school holidays.

Christmas Games

WE MANAGE to so fill up our Christmas day with dining and with toys and candies for the children that we do not feel the need of Christmas games. But there are plenty of them, with ample warrant of old custom, to while away an hour or half a day.

Football in England was distinctly a Christmas game. Our climate and our way of playing it have combined to make Thanksgiving the end of the football season. By Christmas the players are either well enough to enjoy the foot or too dead to worry about it.

Blindman's bluff is a good indoor Christmas game, and in many a household could help out the pleasure of the day when the toys begin to pall. Then there's the time-honored game of snapdragon, another English institution.

We will never take kindly to the Christmas games that have been popular in other northern lands, such as the sword dance of Sweden. Boys blacken their faces, and one of them is put to death by a player made up as a hideous old woman. Then the victim recovers and dances with his slayer. It is supposed to belong to some ancient ritual of worship when the Scandinavians were pagans and sacrificed to the deity Freya. Modern children like their fun less horrible.

What Christmas Candles Mean

THE candles that used to ornament the trees, and the electric lights which are so much safer these days, go back to a custom almost universally prevalent in Europe and significant of many things, from piety to misfortune, as their burning was interpreted.

In Denmark two immense tallow candles were stood on the festive board, and they represented the husband and wife. Each was named for its household patron, and whichever one burned the longer gave promise to its patron of the longer life. If either candle happened to be extinguished before it burned down completely, the portent was one of speedy death. It may be understood what awful penalties awaited anybody in the house who so much as dared touch one of those candles or exhaled a vigorous breath near them.

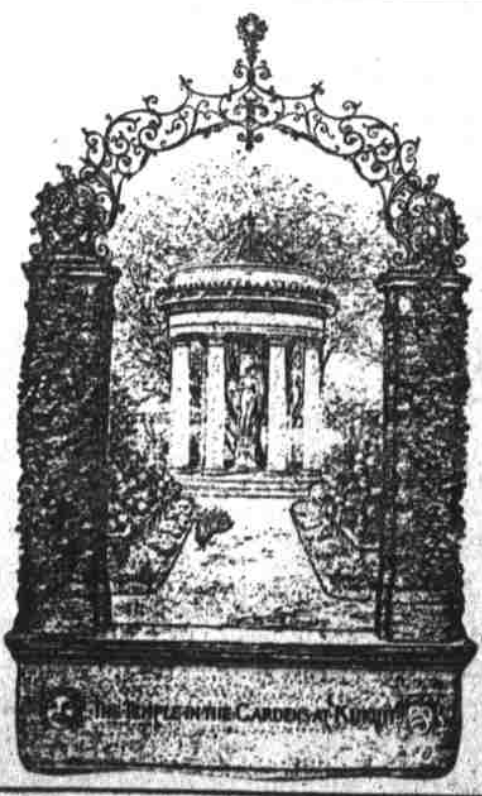
In Norway similar superstitions attached to the Yule candle, and its burning shed upon all blessings of abundance. It was lighted every night until New Year's day, and then the end that remained was used in various ways, paralleled in other northern lands. Sweden and let the chickens feed on the tallow. In Denmark the candle ends were lighted during thunderstorms as safeguards against the lightning. The Yule candles always preserved some peculiar sanctity and virtue for invoking good fortune and warding off evil.

Rockefeller's Christmas Greeting

THE Christmas and New Year card custom has its votaries all over the world and in all classes of society, from the poor, who can't afford to send anything more expensive, up to the kings and queens, who can't afford it, either. When you happen to be a king or queen, the enormous number of people who think you ought to remember them with something or other would beggar any monarch who couldn't make a picture postal serve the purpose. Even a John D. Rockefeller, when New Year comes around, depends on a card for the presentation of his good wishes to his thousands of acquaintances.

Of course, if you happen to belong to the Rockefeller family, or are an intimate friend, you may receive some more personal attention at Christmas and New Year's. But you'd probably get one of these greeting cards, anyway; and after you got it, you could have the rest of the year to puzzle over where the dickens and what the dickens Kikkut may be.

It serves the purpose of being a pleasant and dignified salute to those who, so far as he is aware, are friends of his; and, by the thousands who receive copies of the Rockefeller New Year card, the unostentatious remembrance is pretty generally treasured as something worth keeping.



*With hearty
 Christmas Greetings
 and all good wishes
 for the
 New Year
 from
 Mr. & Mrs. John D. Rockefeller*